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# Graham Greene, How Do You Do It?

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 8 — Graham Greene is in town, a most subtle tourist bearing the gifts and burdens of imagination.

"A major character has to come somehow out of the unconscious," the writer told a questioner in a rare and vivid appearance beyond the pages of his books. He told of cataloguing his dreams, searching for the tracks of a fresh character in fiction. "Because I was psychoanalyzed when I was 16," he said, "I have always been interested in dreams and the unconscious."

A select audience of his readers were rapt in inquiring about evil and boredom, God and Communism and the ways of Mr. Greene's mind as he spoke in a private session at Georgetown University Monday night.

"The moment comes when a character does or says something you hadn't thought about," he told another questioner, and Mr. Greene's gratitude and longing for this serendipitous trick seemed palpable in the dimness of Gaston Hall. "At that moment he's alive and you leave it to him."

Yes, but how do you do it? The questions in the hourlong visit were variations of this basic inquiry into the labors of imagination.

"I generally have a character and the beginning of a story," Mr. Greene said, "and the end of a story." A pause, a thin smile from the angular, white-haired man seated onstage in a blue suit worthy of his wartime days as an intelligence agent. "And in between," he continued, "the middle develops in a way I don't foresee."

Yes, but how do you do it?

"When I was young, I wrote a book in nine months, like a childbirth," he said, looking back from his 82d year. With time, the process lengthened for him to three years, then 10 years, he said, sounding autumnal. "Now there are long intervals before the idea for a new book comes. That's a very painful period."

## Last Visited Here 8 Years Ago

His friend Joe Jeffs, head of the university's library, invited Mr. Greene, who has occasionally been critical of the United States across decades of writing, to visit and speak here despite past bad experiences with American politics, including visa objections dating to the McCarthy era. Back then, he denounced an "inform-er" mentality loose in the land.

Mr. Greene, who lives in France, last visited Washington eight years ago for the signing of the Panama Canal treaties, choosing then to avoid restirring old controversy by coming on a Panamanian visa from Latin American, which he often visits. This time there was no trouble in his visit, and today he let Mr. Jeffs begin leading him as a quiet tourist through the capital and on to Baltimore and Annapolis, and then to Thomas Jefferson's creation, the University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

Monday night, enjoying the friendly literary inquisition, Mr. Greene never mentioned or hinted at any hard feelings about Washington. Rather, he spoke after privately making a gift to the university's Library Associates: his diary and literary journal from 1936, and an unpublished work from the same period entitled "Waiting for a War." Led by Mr. Jeffs, the university has been quietly building a Graham Greene archive.

In his answers to the invited audience of several hundred fans, Mr. Greene sketched parts of an avid life in fiction and journalism, cinema and theater, often tinged with political intrigue, real and imagined. Some of his characters seemed to have survived more strongly in his readers' imaginations.

"Did I say that?" he responded when asked about something he created almost 50 years ago. "I merely said it. I don't think I believe it. Not now, anyway."

All his work was prompted mainly, he said, by the simple, relentless flight from boredom. He told how he played Russian roulette as a bored teen-ager, then switched to writing as a safer diversion.

"It's been my life," he said of his decades of visiting turbulent locales, from Cuba to Indochina, to create works of fiction and journalism that leave his readers disturbed with questions of mortality and politics. "If you can write about politics when politics

can mean life or death, then they can be interesting."

Mr. Greene, who converted to Roman Catholicism from Anglicanism, was polite with the inevitable questions about "Catholic writers," a genus he does not acknowledge. He related in a bureaucratic way his religious devotion and his fascination with the mechanics of Communism.

"We have our Politburo in the Curia," he said with a smile of the Vatican, drawing approving laughter from some in the audience at Georgetown, a Catholic institution. He described with amusement how his novel, "The Power and the Glory," was condemned by a church censor but later praised by a Pope.

"I'm uncomfortable with the present Pope," he said, contending that John Paul II had failed to distinguish adequately between the Communist government in Poland and Marxist governments in Latin America, where, he said, the church had begun to lead in social reform.

More laughter came as Mr. Greene mocked his early campus intoxication with the Russian revolution by describing as a lark his undergraduate days 60 years ago when he joined the Communist Party at Oxford. "I stayed four weeks and contributed six pence a week," he confessed one more time, smiling at the long-ago.

Mr. Greene said he knew his friend Kim Philby had leftist views when they worked as intelligence agents in World War II, but he said he was surprised by Mr. Philby's eventual flight to Moscow as a Soviet spy. Had he known, Mr. Greene said, he might have allowed him 24 hours to flee as a friend, then reported him.

## A 'Correspondence With Kim'

"I have correspondence with Kim," Mr. Greene said. "Sometimes his letters were of interest and I handed them on" to the British authorities. "He would know that," he said wistfully.

Part of his charm for the audience clearly was that sharp fragments of Graham Greene's reality reappear burnished in his fiction, most graphically in his movie scripts for "The Third Man" and "Our Man in Havana." After all his talk of dreams and flight from boredom, he sounded like a proud laborer in describing how anger had worked just as well to settle esthetic struggles with Carol Reed, the movie director.

"The fighting would begin and I'd say, 'Oh for God's sake let's abandon the bloody thing,' and after that everything would go smoothly," Mr. Greene told his listeners, who departed after thankful applause, still wondering how he does it.